

## Introduction

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Not all good writers are great spellers. We all need to check the dictionary every so often; but, as you've probably found, dictionaries do not always agree. This section provides some general guidelines and word lists to help you use the correct spelling in your writing. The list of preferred spellings in rule SP.4 presents words frequently misspelled in MMS publications. (See *GPO* or *WNI 3* for further reference.) The list in SP.5 presents commonly confused words and their correct spellings. For further reference, consult *GPO* and a good dictionary.

☞ Do not rely on computer spelling checkers to catch all spelling errors. If the error creates a legitimate word, the spelling checker will not recognize it as an error. For example: *I new better. With these knew spelling checkers, I won't have any difficulty; I'll be a grate writer.*

## Basic Rules

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**SP.1.**—Do not allow pronunciation to cause you to misspell a word; look it up. Use the *GPO* and its supplement, *Word Division*, and *WNI 3*.

**SP.2.**—Avoid **colloquial and dialect spellings** in scientific and technical writing.

through not thru

**SP.3.**—Many plural forms of words have **irregular spellings**. (See Plurals.)

# SPELLING

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## Preferred Spellings

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**SP.4.**—The following list contains preferred spellings for those words with variant forms. It also contains some words that are frequently misspelled. Single and plural forms are indicated as (s.) or (p.). Any **exceptions** to *GPO* style are indicated by an asterisk.

### A

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abridgment  
accommodate, accommodated  
accumulate  
acknowledge  
acknowledgment  
adapter  
addendum (s.), addenda (p.)  
adjuster  
adviser, advisor (legal)  
aging  
align  
all right  
allot, allotted  
appall  
appendixes  
archeology *or* archaeology  
ascendance

### B

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barreled, barreling  
beveled, beveling  
biased  
boulder

### C

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caliber  
canceled, canceling, cancellation  
Caribbean  
catalog  
channeled, channeling  
combated, combating  
competitive  
compressible  
connector\*  
consensus  
consignor  
converter  
conveyor  
corrodible  
counseled, counselor  
counseling  
credible

## D

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datum (s.), data (p.)  
defense  
descendant  
development  
diagramed, diagraming  
diagrammatic  
dialed, dialing  
dialog  
disk  
dispersible  
draft

## E

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employee  
enclose, enclosure  
ensure (guarantee)  
entrust  
equaled, equaling  
exhibitor  
existence

## F

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favor  
flier  
focused, focusing  
forbade  
foreseen  
fulfill  
fuse

## G

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gauge  
germane  
goodbye  
graveled, graveling  
gray (color)

## H

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harass  
homogeneity

## I

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inoculate  
input, inputting  
in situ  
insure (protect)  
intern

# SPELLING

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intervener, intervenor (legal)  
irrelevant

## J

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judgment

## K

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kerneled, kerneling  
kilogram

## L

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labeled, labeling  
lessee, lessor  
leveled, leveler, leveling  
liaison  
libeled, libeler, libeling  
license  
likable  
liquefaction  
Louisianian

## M

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maneuver  
memorandums  
meter  
micropascal  
modeled, modeling, modeler  
mold  
mollusks (phylum Mollusca) (noun)  
molluscan (adjective)  
moneys  
monogramed, monograming  
monolog  
movable

## N

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nonexistent  
nonplused  
northward

## O

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occasion  
occurrence  
offense  
oil spill\*

## P

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parallel, paralleled, paralleling  
penciled, penciling  
percent (always spell out in text)  
principal (chief), principle (rule, legal)  
privilege  
programmatic  
programmed, programmer, programming

## Q

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quarreled, quarreling  
questionnaire

## R

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reconnaissance  
referring, referable  
relater, relator (legal)  
resistance  
right-of-way  
rights-of-way

## S

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salable  
seafloor  
semisubmersible  
signaled, signaling  
sizable  
skillful  
soluble  
spatial  
stenciled, stenciling  
sulphur\*  
supersede

## T

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totaled, totaling  
toward  
transfer, transferred, transferable  
transshipment  
traveled, traveler, traveling

## W

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willful

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\*Exception to *GPO* style.

# SPELLING

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## Commonly Confused Words

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**SP.5.**—Many words sound alike but have different meanings and thus different spellings to convey the appropriate meaning to the reader. The following list provides some of the commonly confused words to help you use the right spelling for your intended meaning. (For an extensive list of words likely to be misused or confused, see *Words Into Type*, part VI.) The following abbreviations are used in this list: adj., adjective; n., noun; v., verb.

### A

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**adapt** (v., make suitable)

**adept** (adj. proficient)

**adopt** (v. choose)

**adverse** (opposed)

**averse** (having a dislike for, aversion)

**obverse** (counterpart)

**advice** (n.)

**advise** (v.)

**affect** (v., to influence)

**effect** (n., result; v., bring about)

**all ready** (prepared)

**already** (at this time)

**altar** (n., table used for religious purposes)

**alter** (v., to change)

**altogether** (entirely, wholly)

**all together** (in the same place)

**ascent** (rising)

**assent** (consent)

**assure** (set mind at rest)

**ensure** (guarantee)

**insure** (protect)

### B

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**biannual** (twice a year)

**biennial** (two years)

### C

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**calendar** (schedule)

**calender** (press)

**capital** (chief, outstanding; financial resources; city)  
**capitol** (a building occupied by a legislative body)

**censor** (examine)  
**censure** (blame)

**cite** (summon, quote)  
**sight** (vision)  
**site** (location)

**complement** (fill up or complete)  
**compliment** (flatter, free gift)

**comprise** (see include)

**consul** (government official)  
**council** (governing body)  
**counsel** (advise)

**corroborate** (strengthen, support)  
**collaborate** (work together)

## D

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**devisable** (given by will)  
**divisible** (capable of being separated)

**discreet** (prudent)  
**discrete** (distinct)

**die** (death)  
**dye** (to color)

**dyeing** (coloring)  
**dying** (death)

## E

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**effect** (see affect)

**emigrate** (go from a region)  
**immigrate** (come into a region)

## F

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**farther** (distance in space or time)  
**further** (going beyond, move forward in a nonspatial sense)

**foreword** (intro. note in a publication)  
**forward** (toward the front, direction)

**forego** (precede)  
**forgo** (relinquish)

## I

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**imminent** (impending)

**eminent** (prominent)

**include** (components listed do not constitute the whole)

**comprise** (components listed are the whole)

**constitute** (components listed make up the whole)

**consist of** (components listed constitute the whole)

**insure** (see assure)

**its** (possession)

**it's** (it is)

## L

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**lay** (laying, laid, laid) (to set, put, or place)

**lie** (lying, lay, lain) (to rest or recline, to have direction)

**loose** (unattached)

**lose** (incur loss)

## M

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**material** (pertaining to matter)

**materiel** (equipment)

**may, might** (basically mean the same thing, but *might* has a negative connotation)

## O

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**ordinance** (law)

**ordnance** (munitions)

## P

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**peremptory** (decisive)

**preemptory** (preference, to appropriate)

**perquisite** (privilege)

**prerequisite** (required, beforehand)

**personal** (self, private)

**personnel** (staff)

**perspective** (view)

**prospective** (expected)

**proscribe** (forbid, denounce)

**prescribed** (order, direction)

**principle** (rule, law)

**principal** (chief, leader)



## R

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**recollect** (to recall)

**re-collect** (collect again)

**resort** (vacation spot)

**re-sort** (sort again)

## S

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**stationary** (fixed)

**stationery** (paper)

**site** (*see* cite)

## T

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**terrain** (contour, topography)

**terrane** (rock formation)

**than** (for comparison)

**then** (when, at that time)

**there** (in that place)

**their** (belonging to them)

**too** (also; more than enough)

**two** (number 2)

## **SPELLING**

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**Additional Notes**

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